

19

source icon. If the activation gesture's selection includes a source icon, at block 1530, the content associated with the target icon upon which the release was made is activated with the source icon. Thereafter, at block 1532, the target cluster is dismissed, including the bands, and the exemplary routine 1500 terminates.

Alternatively, at decision block 1526, if the activation gesture's selection was empty, at block 1528, the content associated with the target icon is activated. At block 1532, the target cluster is dismissed, and the exemplary routine 1500 terminates.

At decision block 1522, if the release was not located on a target icon, at block 1524, the release action is completed in accordance with the typical operation of the computing system. For example, if a source icon was dragged and dropped, but not on a target icon, the source icon would be moved to the new location as is typical with a drag-and-drop operation. After completing the typical release action, at block 1532, the target cluster is dismissed, and the exemplary routine 1500 terminates.

While the preferred embodiment of the invention has been illustrated and described, it will be appreciated that various changes can be made therein without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A method for facilitating user access to remote icons on a display screen, the method comprising:

detecting an activation gesture, the activation gesture having an origin, a direction, a location, and a selection; selecting base icons on the display screen according to the activation gesture;

generating a target cluster of target icons, wherein each target icon corresponds to a selected base icon remotely displayed on the display screen;

displaying the target cluster at a predetermined proximity distance from the activation gesture's location; and

displaying target icons in proximity to the activation gesture's location until an action dismissing the target icons is detected; and

upon detecting an action dismissing the target cluster, removing the target cluster from the display screen.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the activation gesture's selection is a nonempty selection having a source icon or an empty selection.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein the activation gesture is a drag gesture.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein selecting base icons on the display screen according to the activation gesture comprises:

determining a central vector originating at the activation gesture's origin and extending to the limits of the display screen in the activation gesture's direction;

determining a target region defined by two boundary lines originating at the activation gesture's origin and diverging away from and on either side of the central vector extending to the limits of the display screen; and

selecting base icons located within the target region according to the activation gesture.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein selecting base icons on the display screen according to the activation gesture further comprises selecting base icons located within the target region and at a distance greater than a predetermined distance from the activation gesture's origin.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the predetermined distance is user configurable.

20

7. The method of claim 5, wherein selecting base icons on the display screen according to the activation gesture further comprises:

determining whether the activation gesture's selection included a source icon and, if so, selecting base icons located within the target region and at a distance greater than the predetermined distance from the activation gesture's origin and representing content compatible with the source icon.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein selecting base icons on the display screen according to the activation gesture further comprises:

determining whether the number of selected base icons exceeds a predetermined limit and, if so, repeatedly:

reducing the area of the target region; and

selecting base icons located within the reduced target region and at a distance greater than the predetermined distance from the activation gesture's origin and compatible with the source icon if the activation gesture's selection includes the source icon;

until the number of selected base icons is less than or equal to the predetermined limit.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein the two boundary lines diverge away from and on either side of the central vector extending to the limits of the display screen at a predetermined angle.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein the predetermined angle is user configurable.

11. The method of claim 9, wherein reducing the area of the target region comprises reducing the predetermined angle at which the boundary lines diverge away from and at either side of the central vector.

12. The method of claim 4, wherein the activation gesture is modified according to a modification condition, and wherein selecting base icons on the display screen according to the activation gesture further comprises:

selecting base icons located within the target region and according to a predetermined criteria associated with the modification condition.

13. The method of claim 1, wherein displaying the target cluster at the predetermined proximity distance from the activation gesture's location comprises:

determining a center point of the target cluster, the center point determined according to the spatial arrangement of the target cluster;

determining a vector originating at the activation gesture's origin and proceeding in the activation gesture's direction; and

displaying the target cluster on the display screen such that the target cluster's center point is located on the determined vector at the predetermined proximity distance from the activation gesture's location.

14. The method of claim 1, wherein displaying the target cluster at the predetermined proximity distance from the activation gesture's location further comprises displaying a band between each target icon in the target cluster and its corresponding base icon.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein displaying the target cluster at the predetermined proximity distance from the activation gesture's location further comprises temporarily displaying each base icon in an altered state until an action dismissing the target icons is detected.

16. The method of claim 14, wherein displaying a band between each target icon in the target cluster and the corresponding base icon comprises iteratively selecting each target icon in the target cluster in a closest-first manner and